

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PGOONU GH

SUBJ: GOG ATTACKS PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE

REF: ACCRA 0808

SUMMARY: GOG HAS LAUNCHED A COUNTERATTACK IN PRESS AGAINST NEW OPPOSITION GROUP, PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE. BASIC QUESTIONS NOW ARE HOW GOG WILL HANDLE CHALLENGE AND WHETHER OPPONENTS OF UNION GOVERNMENT WILL SIDE WITH LT. GEN. AFRIFA, LEADER OF MOVEMENT.

END SUMMARY.

1. ON JANUARY 31, GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED GHANAIAI TIMES AND DAILY GRAPHIC BLASTED NEW OPPOSITION GROUP FORMED JANUARY 27 (REFTEL), QUOTING COMMISSIONER FOR NRC AFFAIRS E.K. BUCKMAN AS SAYING GOG "WISHES IT TO BE KNOWN THAT LT. GEN. AFRIFA AND MR. K.A. GBEDEMAH ARE DISGRUNTLED MEN WHO CANNOT PRESUME TO SPEAK AS STATESMEN." ACCORDING TO BUCKMAN, GOG HAD BEEN HOLDING SECRET MEETINGS WITH THESE FORMER POLITICIANS TO SEE IF THEY COULD BE INVOLVED IN CURRENT POLITICAL SCENE WITHOUT CREATING DISUNITY. AFRIFA HAD BEEN INVITED

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TO MEET WITH CHIEF OF DEFENSE STAFF AKUFFO, WHO REMINDED HIM HE WAS STILL ON THE RESERVE LIST, WHICH PROHIBITS POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. BUCKMAN SAID GOG WAS SHOCKED TO LEARN THAT AFRIFA AND GBEDEMAH HAD "BROKEN FAITH" WITH GOG BY HOLDING PRESS CONFERENCE AND ANNOUNCING THEIR OPPOSITION TO UNION GOVERNMENT.

2. EDITORIALY, TIMES TRIED TO DISMISS PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE AS "LITTLE MORE THAN A TOOL. . .SET UP TO PREVENT A FULL-SCALE MOBILIZATION OF NATIONAL EFFORT TO PROMOTE PEACE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH A UNITED FRONT." RAKING OPEN OLD WOUNDS, PAPER REMINDED READERS OF AFRIFA'S PAST ACTIVITIES, ASSERTING THAT HE HAD DISQUALIFIED CONVENTION PEOPLE'S PARTY ACTIVISTS AFTER THE 1966 COUP, THEREBY MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR BUSIA TO WIN THE 1969 ELECTIONS WITHOUT MUCH COMPETITION, AND, AS CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL LIBERATION COUNCIL, HAD DAMAGED THE ECONOMY BY SELLING NKRUMAH-ERA STATE CORPORATIONS TO PRIVATE FIRMS AND INDIVIDUALS.

3. GRAPHIC EDITORIAL PROFESSED ASTONISHMENT THAT AFRIFA AND GBEDEMAH, FORMERLY BITTER RIVALS, SHOULD NOW BE IN THE SAME CAMP. IT, TOO, REVIEWED PAST MISDEEDS OF BOTH MEN. NOTING THAT RULING SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL'S (SMC) BAN ON POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IS STILL IN FORCE, GRAPHIC CALLED ON SMC TO BE "VIGILANT AND UNCOMPROMISING AGAINST ANY MOVE AIMED AT REVIVING THE BITTERNESS, ACRIMONY AND DIVISION THAT BEDEVILED PARTY POLITICS IN GHANA" IN THE PAST.

4. DESPITE OBVIOUS BIAS AGAINST NEW MOVEMENT, HOWEVER, BOTH PAPERS ALSO CARRIED FRONT-PAGE ARTICLES REPORTING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ITS BIRTH AND INCLUDING MANY OF THE ANTI-SMC POINTS MADE BY AFRIFA AND GBEDEHAM IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

5. IN FOLLOW-UP ATTACK FEBRUARY 1, BOTH GRAPHIC AND TIMES PRINTED FACSIMILE OF DECEMBER 18 LETTER FROM AFRIFA TO ACHEAMPONG, IN WHICH AFRIFA EXPRESSED FEARS FOR HIS OWN SAFETY AND SAID HE HAD THEREFORE DECIDED "TO BE IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT. . .TO PROTECT MYSELF AND THOSE WHO WERE ASSOCIATED WITH THE 1966 COUP." AFRIFA WENT ON TO EXPLAIN "THE DANGER THAT I SEE VERY CLEARLY IS THAT INDEPENDENT INDIVIDUALS IN PARLIAMENT UNDER UNION GOVERNMENT WILL ALMOST IMMEDIATELY CONSTITUTE THEMSELVES INTO A POLITICAL GROUP. . .THEN AN ACT WILL BE ENACTED FOR THE TRIAL OF SOLDIERS WHO HAVE MADE COUPS."

6. IN FEBRUARY 1 EDITORIALS, PAPERS CONTINUED TO BLAST NEW MOVEMENT. GRAPHIC FOUND ITSELF FACING "STAGGERING BUT NAUSEATING PROBABILITY THAT AFRIFA WAS WITH ONE FACE PLANNING WITH CIVILIANS AGAINST THE MILITARY AND WITH ANOTHER FACE TRYING TO GET THE MILITARY PLAN AGAINST THE CIVILIANS". TIMES COUNSELED

READERS THAT "MR. GBEDEMAH NEEDS EVERYONE'S SYMPATHY AND PITY RATHER THAN REBUKE" AND LABELED AFRIFA "FEAR-STRICKEN AND CONFUSED."

7. COMMENT: POPULAR OPINION ON PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE HAS NOT YET CRYSTALIZED, BUT APPEARANCE OF MOVEMENT HAS CLEARLY STIMULATED STRONG POLITICAL IMPULSES LATENT IN MANY GHANAIS, ESPECIALLY AMONG PROFESSIONAL CLASS. ELITE HERE APPEARS TO BE DELIGHTED THAT AN OPPOSITION GROUP HAS SURFACED AT LAST. WE NOW THINK BASIC QUESTIONS ARE: (A) HOW WILL GOG DEAL WITH CHALLENGE POSED BY MOVEMENT, AND (B) WILL DISPARATE ANTI-ACHEAMPONG FORCES ACCEPT AFRIFA AS THEIR STANDARD-BEARER? IF AFRIFA IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACCEPTED, WE MAY BE WITNESSING A DE FACTO RETURN TO PARTY POLITICS IN GHANA. HOWEVER, IF HIS CANDIDACY IS TOLERATED BY SMC BUT ELICITS ONLY LUKEWARM SUPPORT OR APATHY FROM MASS OF CITIZENS, JUNIOR GOVERNMENT BANDWAGON WILL ROLL ON STRONGER THAN BEFORE AND WILL HAVE EVEN EARNED A DEGREE OF LEGITIMACY IN COMPETITION WITH PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT.
SMITH

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